



December 17, 2012

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We were deeply saddened to hear the news of the school events in Connecticut on Friday. Our thoughts are with the members of that community. I want to reassure you that the safety of our students and staff is always our highest priority and we take seriously our responsibility to ensure the safety of your child every day.

I would like to remind all of our families that we have a plan in place at each of our schools to handle emergency situations. There are province-wide guidelines designed to help keep students and staff safe in an emergency and we regularly practice our safety procedures through discussions and exercises.

We also work closely with the province and our police partners to review and update our practices on a regular basis.

All Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) staff are required to wear board-issued identification badges during school hours so they can be easily identifiable. All visitors and volunteers are required to check in at the office upon their arrival and they are issued a school badge that they are required to wear while in the building. Building exits are locked throughout the day to restrict unauthorized access and should not be propped open by students, staff or parents/guardians for any reason.

These are just a few of the measures we have in place to help ensure the safety of students and staff at all times.

We know that children and youth may raise questions and concerns about this tragedy. Here are a few tips for you to consider if they do:

- ***Speak with your child*** – If children ask questions, talking to them about their worries and concerns is the first step to help them feel safe and begin to cope with the events occurring around them.
- ***Keep home a safe place*** – Children and youth, regardless of age, often find home to be a safe haven when the world around them becomes overwhelming. During times of crisis, it is important to remember that your children may come home seeking the safe feeling they have being there.
- ***Watch for signs of stress, fear or anxiety*** – After a traumatic event, it is typical for children (and adults) to experience a wide range of emotions including fearfulness, shock, anger, grief and anxiety. Your children's behaviours may change because of their response to the event. This is normal for everyone and should disappear over time.
- ***Maintain a normal routine*** – Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise.

The HRSB will continue to be proactive and vigilant in our efforts to keep students, staff and visitors safe at all times. Schools are very safe places and the risk of targeted violence occurring at one of our schools is low. The incident in Newtown, Connecticut is a reminder that we must always be vigilant and underscores the importance of schools being prepared and having a practiced plan in place.

As always, if your child is struggling, please feel free to contact your school principal.

Regards,

Judy White
Acting Superintendent